

Sparrows

by [Barbara Crooker](#) in the [September 16, 2015](#) issue

I never learned to tell one from another—
swamp, field, song, vesper—they're all scraps
of drab: rust, dun, buff, tan. Some streaky-breasted,
some not. We hear the flutter of their wings, look up,
then yawn, ho hum, a sparrow. No rush for the binoculars.
Like the poor, they are always with us. Look at them
flick and flit in this dry meadow of foxtail, switchgrass,
goldenrod; every leaf, stem, and seed head burnished
in the dying light. Maybe they are the only angels
we get in this life. But the very hairs on our head
are numbered, and the father knows them all by name.
Each sparrow, too, has a song—no flashy cardinal
selling cheer, no sky-blue jay's ironic squawk,
no eponymous chicka-dee-dee-dee. Just us,
the unnoticed, gleaning what others have left behind,
and singing for all we're worth, teetering on a bit
of bracken at the edge of a wild field.